

CRUISE ANNOUNCEMENT
Charter Vessel Vesteraalen (Cruise 2002-01)

AREA AND PERIOD OF OPERATION

The fishing vessel FV *Vesteraalen* has been chartered for 15 days to conduct fisheries research in the eastern Aleutian Islands between Unimak Island and the Island of Four Mountains (long. 165°W to 170°W) in depths between 20 and 300 m. Loading and equipment setup will begin on May 13 in Dutch Harbor and the charter period will end on May 27. Operations for the 2002 Aleutians Island survey will commence immediately upon completion of the research operations.

OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this cruise include:

1. Quantitative examination of the relationships between sediment type, food availability and fish distribution, and
2. Collection of acoustic information to establish a range of sediment types likely to be encountered in future survey efforts to be used in sediment and habitat classification efforts.

METHODS AND GEAR

Five relatively small area (100 - 300 km²) will be sampled over two to three day intervals. Sampling will be conducted at depths ranging from 20 to 300 m. The first phase of sampling at each location will consist of several bottom grabs and video camera drops. Bottom grabs will be collected with 0.05 m² Ponar grabs. Benthic infauna, sediment grain analysis and total organic carbon samples will be collected from the grab samples.

The second phase of sampling at each location will consist of a series of 15 minutes trawls. Trawl catches will be sorted, weighed and enumerated by species. Biological information (length and stomach contents) will be collected for some species. Fauna that cannot be readily identified in the field will be collected for positive identification. All other organisms collected will be returned to the water as soon as possible.

Standard survey bottom trawling will be conducted with four seam, high-opening polyethylene Nor'eastern trawls equipped with rubber bobbin roller gear. This standard survey trawl has a 27.2 m headrope and 36.7 m footrope consisting of a 24.9 m center section with adjacent 5.9 m flying wing extensions. Accessory gear for the

Nor'eastern trawl includes 54.9 m triple dandyline and 1.8 X 2.7 m steel V-doors weighing approximately 850 kg each. The projected catches listed in table 1 were estimated from trawl catch per unit effort data using similar gear at similar times of year (April - June) in the portion of the sampling areas within Steller sea lion critical habitat areas (figure 1). Species with estimated total catches less than 10 kg were eliminated from the table.

ITINERARY

May 13	First day of charter, begin loading and setup in Dutch Harbor, Alaska
May 15	Begin research operations
May 27	End research operation and return to Dutch Harbor.

SCIENTIFIC STAFF AND AFFILIATIONS

F/V Vesteraalen

DATES: May 13 - May 26

PORTS: Dutch Harbor to Dutch Harbor

FPC	Michael Martin	AFSC
	Bill Flerx	AFSC
	Mei-sun Yang	AFSC
	Nate Raring	AFSC
	Robin Harrison	AFSC
	Steve Syrjala	AFSC
	George Cronin	AFSC

Abbreviations

AFSC - Alaska Fisheries Science Center
FPC - Field Party Chief

For further information, contact Dr. Gary Stauffer, Director, Resource Assessment and Conservation Engineering Division, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way Northeast, Seattle, Washington, 98115-0070. Telephone (206) 526-4170.
